



MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Claude R. Canizares*Vice President for Research and Associate Provost
Bruno Rossi Professor of Physics*

77 Massachusetts Avenue, Building 3-234
Cambridge, MA 02139-4307
Phone 617-253-3206
Fax 617-253-3193
Email crc@mit.edu

August 31, 2006

Senator Tom Coburn
Chairman, Subcommittee on Federal
Financial Management, Government Information,
and International Security
Attn. Ms. Anna Shopen,
439 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510.

Dear Senator Coburn:

As MIT's Vice President for Research and Associate Provost I am writing to respond to your letter of July 27, 2006 seeking answers to questions regarding MIT's views on appropriations earmarking. MIT has a deep and longstanding commitment to the open, competitive, merit-based allocation of federal resources for university research and education and is opposed to earmarking of federally supported research or education funding.

MIT's leadership believes that our nation's global pre-eminence has been maintained for more than fifty years largely through a commitment to excellence in science, engineering, technology, and education. Its importance is apparent and implies that care must be exerted in the allocation of research support. Vigorous intellectual competition open to all is essential to the health, vitality and productivity of this enterprise. Although the specific mechanisms for competitive merit review differ somewhat from agency to agency, we believe the principle is of uniform importance. In our view, the system works best when science funding decisions are made by those who are highly qualified to understand the subtleties and complexities of the proposed scientific work.

Earmarked funds, while a relatively quick source of research funding, have a potentially corrosive effect on the scientific research capabilities of our national research institutions. Fair, merit-based competition for research funding forces scientists and institutions to consistently submit their ideas and methods to a rigorous evaluation process. Awards which bypass this process do not motivate scientists to improve their research capabilities and performance. At a time when the nation is increasingly concerned about competition from our foreign competitors

in areas of science and technology, a trend away from competitively awarded grants and contracts is, in MIT's view, quite troubling.

With a strong commitment to the principles of merit-based allocation of federal resources, we at MIT have assiduously avoided Congressionally earmarked funds for research. We intend to continue our longstanding adherence to this principle and to the belief in open, competitive systems. With this background, I will respond to each of your specific questions below:

Question (1) - Please provide a list of all appropriations received by your institution from the year 2000 to the present, and the amount of assistance received.

As stated above, MIT did not seek and has not knowingly received direct earmarks or other directly appropriated funds in the years you ask about nor has MIT specifically sought or supported such funding. This is our current policy and was our policy in prior years, as well. Instead, MIT, a major research university, competes for competitive, merit-based awards and contracts from five principal federally-supported science agencies, NIH, DOD, NSF, DOE and NASA, and competitive awards for education programs principally from NSF.

Despite our internal vigilance and clearly communicating our institutional opposition to earmarking to our researchers, from time to time those affiliated with MIT may have received funding earmarked to another entity through coalitions or subcontracts. Those situations are handled on a case-by-case basis by the Institute.

Questions (2) and (3) - Please provide a summary of the specific objectives or goals set to be achieved by any entity, program, project or service associated with an appropriation at your institution, and, for each appropriation, a list of accomplishments that can be attributed to the project, entity, program or service (e.g. published peer-reviewed research, etc., depending on the nature of the earmarks your institution has received). How does your institution set a measure for standards to achieve quality and outcomes for entities, programs, projects or services receiving assistance through earmarks or appropriations?

As stated above, MIT did not seek and has not knowingly received direct earmarks or other directly appropriated funds; since it did not receive such funding it has no justification or metrics for such funds.

Question (4) - Does your institution have a stated policy regarding Congressional earmarks or appropriations (if so, please describe)? Does your institution have a policy regarding partnering in research projects with other universities who may have a differing policy?

As noted, MIT has a long-standing policy against accepting earmarked funding. This policy, which is placed on the website for MIT's Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP), provides guidance and instruction on this matter to all MIT faculty and researchers, and states:

Congressional Earmarks

MIT has a long-standing policy that prohibits the knowing acceptance of grants and contracts funded via Congressional action. Such awards are known as "earmarks" and funding is not generally the result of peer review. Earmarked funds are often a way to secure funds for new buildings, and for major equipment needed for cutting edge research, but institutionally MIT avoids seeking or accepting earmarked funds.

It is not always obvious when funds have reached MIT from another institution through the earmarking process. In the past several years, we have identified a handful of programs where the funds that came to MIT through a competitive process were actually earmarks for another organization and MIT was a subrecipient from that organization. It is, nonetheless, MIT policy not to accept earmarks and, where this is known, it is important that the Institute (via OSP) be notified.

OSP, which supervises all of MIT's research and education contract and grant processes, provides the campus with oversight on this issue and alerts my office on any problems.

Question (5) - Has your institution considered hiring a lobbyist to assist your institution in attaining familiarity with the opportunities that may exist to obtain Federal funds for research -- such as the earmarking process?

MIT has neither retained nor contracted with an outside lobbyist or lobbying firm and has no plans to do so:

The Institute has long believed that it has an obligation to try to assist and serve the nation in science and engineering policy, research, and education. I believe that our contributions to national wellbeing and defense have been profound, and we take great pride in them. Part of being an effective national servant means that we must be well informed of federal activities, become an active participant in contributing solutions to national challenges, and provide productive, scientifically-sound information to decision makers within the federal government.

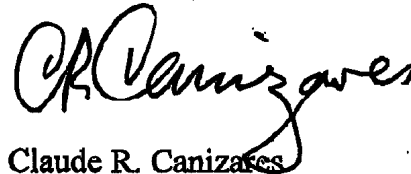
To that end, the Institute established a Washington Office in 1991 within MIT's Office of the President. This small office, which has three policy-focused MIT employees and one MIT administrative support employee, helps to keep faculty, researchers, senior officers, and the rest of the campus informed about federal issues and policies that may affect the Institute and its science research efforts. It tracks developments in the leading science agencies, the status of science budgets, the various science appropriations and authorizing bills, and assists MIT's leaders in playing an advocacy role on national science policy issues and overall science funding and support. The office undertakes these activities while strictly adhering to the Institute's long-standing policy against supporting or accepting any earmarked funds.

Question (6) - In conclusion, do you find Congressionally earmarked funds to have contributed in a substantive way to your academic institution?

As noted above, because MIT accepts no earmarks knowingly, such funds have provided no contribution to our academic institution. As suggested above, MIT is deeply concerned about the increased number of federal grants and contracts directed to specific universities by language found in appropriations bills, their accompanying report language, and conference reports. We fear that this increasingly pervasive practice of earmarking federal science and engineering research funding has the potential to distort strategic national investments in science and technology, and to turn universities, which have provided profound assistance to the nation through education and science research, into just another special interest group.

Please let me know if I can be of further assistance to you in the future on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "CR Canizares", written in a cursive style.

Claude R. Canizares